

TOWN OF BARRE - TAX GRIEVANCE HEARING
September 14, 2016

AGENDA

(This meeting is being audio taped.)

1. Reconvene the FY 2016-2017 Tax Grievance Hearing 6:30 p.m.

2. Changes to the Agenda

Remind Board they are still under oath. If any Board member has not taken the oath please administer:

"I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will well and truly hear and determine all matters at issue between taxpayers and Assessor submitted for my decision. So help me God (or under the pains and penalties of perjury)."

3. Consider approval of the minutes for the July 27, 2016 Tax Grievance Hearing.

4. Hear Tax Grievance Appeals: (Administer oath to Assessor and Appellant:)

"Do you solemnly swear that the evidence you shall give relative to the cause now under consideration shall be the whole truth and nothing but the truth so help you God?"

A) Tony Tofani 6:40 p.m.

B) Karin Bellemare & Jonathan Wagner-Herbert 7:15 p.m.

5. Other Business:

A) Note changes to the Annual calendar - May 2017 Checklist and Open Meeting should be May 3, 2017 and Checklist update meeting in November should be November 2nd.

B) Discuss August 2016 Primary - candidates policy.

C) Voter Checklist process - challenging voters and residency

D) Logistics report on polling place layout - William Bugbee

E) Special election for the School and Town for November Gen. Election - two ballots. Availability different dates.

F) Update from Chair on BCA (as Board of Abatement) for definition of "taxpayer."

G) Any other business which may come before the Board

6. Recess to September 28, 2016, 6:30 p.m.

TAX GRIEVANCE HEARING MINUTES
September 14, 2016

CALL TO ORDER - Chair Paul Malone reconvened the Tax Grievance Hearing meeting on this 27th day of July 2016 at 6:30 p.m.

ROLE CALL - The following members were present: Chair Paul Malone, Town Clerk-Treasurer Donna J. Kelty, Pearl Bugbee, William Bugbee, Charles "Chip" Caste, J. Guy Isabelle, JP Isabelle, Philip Kolling, Robert LaClair, Ed Paquin, Jay Perkins, Virginia Poplawski, Rolland Tessier, R. Lee Walther, Shelia Walther, and Paul White. Members who were absent included: Tracy Delude, W. John "Jack" Mitchell, Christopher Violette (attending other Town Board meetings), and Tom White.

Others present included: Assessor Joseph Levesque, Assistant Town Manager Elaine Wang, Jonathan Wagner-Herbert, and Karin Bellemare.

AGENDA

On a motion by Castle, seconded by William Bugbee, the Board of Civil Authority voted to reschedule the hearing of Tony Tofani to Wednesday, September 28, 2016 at 6:40 p.m. Tracy Delude, W. John "Jack" Mitchell, and Tom White were not present for the vote.

On a motion by JP Isabelle, seconded by Tessier, the Board of Civil Authority amended the September 14, 2016 agenda to remove item 4A, Tony Tofani and to hear as many of the remaining items as possible before the next scheduled appellant arrives. Tracy Delude, W. John "Jack" Mitchell, and Tom White were not present for the vote.

MINUTE APPROVAL

On a motion by LaClair, seconded by Paul White, the minutes of July 27, 2016 Tax Grievance Hearing were approved as presented. Tracy Delude, W. John "Jack" Mitchell, and Tom White were not present for the vote.

BCA OATH

The BCA members who were not present at the last meeting were administered their oath. The Chair reminded the Board members and those present the tax grievance hearings are being audio taped. Please speak clearly and identify yourself prior to speaking.

OTHER BUSINESS (1)

Board members were reminded to change the meeting calendar to reflect the following:

1. The May 2017 Checklist Update and Annual Open Meeting date is May 3, 2017; and
2. The Checklist update meeting for the General Election is November 2, 2016.

Candidate politicking outside the polling place. The Town Clerk-Treasurer informed the Board that during the August 2016 Primary Election there were continual issues with a candidate not staying in the designated area (near the woodchip plant) and being disrespectful to B.C.A. members. Voters made complaints about being "chased" as they tried to enter the polls.

One possible solution to the problem would be to place physical barriers in the designated candidate area (to be referred to as candidate alley). Discussions points included: this has not been an ongoing problem, with the visual barriers voters may feel less offended/threatened by candidates, concern that voters who want to talk with candidates will have to contend with the "barrier," perhaps a compromise would be to have a partial barrier, and the BCA has the right to amend its' policies at any time.

On a motion by Perkins, seconded by William Bugbee, the Board of Civil Authority voted to authorize the Presiding Officer to place stanchions/barriers in candidate alley (located in the grassy area on the side of the woodchip building facing the school gardens) to clearly define a designated area for candidates to campaign and to provide for a center entrance/exit opening to welcome voters who want to spend more time with a candidate. The motion passed with Castle voting no. Tracy Delude, W. John "Jack" Mitchell, and Tom White were not present for the vote.

POLLING PLACE LAYOUT

The past several elections, the B.C.A. has been trying new polling place layouts. An idea was finalized and William Bugbee, Logistics Committee, presented some CAD drawings for the different elections (Local, Primary, and General). Since elections are held at the

Barre Town School gymnasium they were consulted. Their primary concern was student safety which means we have to keep voters from entering the main lobby.

When reviewing the plans Mr. Bugbee pointed to the entrance and exit (out a fire exit door by the stage). Should the plans be accepted by the B.C.A. the stone path outside the exit door will be removed and replaced with something permanent (cement or pavement), depending on the schools preference. Board members commended Mr. Bugbee for his time and effort in compiling the materials.

On a motion by Lee Walther, seconded by Phil Kolling, the B.C.A. voted to adopt the polling place logistic setup plans for the three types of elections (local, primary, and general) which are being held at the Barre Town Middle & Elementary School gymnasium as presented.

HEARING THE APPEALS

4B. Karin Bellemare & Jonathan Wagner-Herbert
175 Snowbridge Road, Tax Map 005 Lot 138-00

The Assessor and appellants were given the oath.

On July 12, 2016 the Town Clerk received an appeal from the property owner. Included in the material was the following: a cover letter stating their opinion that the greenhouse values were incorrect, a copy of the Notice of Grievance from the Assessor, and a copy of the Vermont Department of Taxes Technical Bulletin, issued on May 3, 2000 regarding the definition and valuation of greenhouses. The B.C.A. and Assessor received copies with the July 27, 2016 meeting material.

Assessor Levesque provided the Board with new evidence: a cover letter, copies of the lister card (4 pages) detailing the property valuation, a color ortho photo of the property under appeal, and a copy of a blank business personal property form.

It was noted the property has not been visiting since the town-wide reappraisal which was prior to the new owners taking possession. The Assessor stated he had not seen the bulletin regarding greenhouse valuations until he received this copy. During the appeal to the Assessor the value was lowered as the owners provided material showing the greenhouse purchase price. The type of "building" was re-categorized which resulted in a significant value decrease. He further noted that after reading the bulletin the greenhouses should be assessed as personal property (they are not fixed to the ground) not as real estate which they are currently. Also mentioned was the appearance that some buildings have been removed which the Assessor is not aware of.

RECESS

On a motion by Castle, seconded by William Bugbee, the Tax Grievance Hearing was recessed at 7:12 p.m. to reconvene on Wednesday, September 14, 2016 at 6:30 p.m.

Donna J. Kelty, Town Clerk-Treasurer

B.C.A. Chair

BARRE TOWN BOARD OF CIVIL AUTHORITY REPRESENTATIVES